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***Exeunt Omnes*? Survival, pessimism and time in the work of John H. Herz**

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Abstract

John H. Herz (1908-2005) is better known for his theorisation of the security dilemma than for his conviction that human survival is threatened by the conditions of late modernity. This article explores extinction and survival in his work to interrogate his persistent characterisation as an incorrigible pessimist. In his preoccupation with extinction, Herz would seem a first-rank pessimist, but his intellectual commitments belie this easy categorisation. Specifically, his appeals to interdisciplinary 'survival research' suggest a qualified pessimism that does not foreclose on the potential of humankind to overcome structural, political and normative obstacles. This is consistent with current understandings of pessimism with the broader realist tradition. Herz expressed an 'open' and 'linear' temporality that challenges cyclical and linear-progressive temporalities inherent to realism and liberalism, respectively. Herz articulates, therefore, a 'productive pessimism' that charts a different path for pessimist thought beyond its pejorative connotations. This article contributes to the literature on classical realism, to a growing interest in Herz's intellectual legacy, and to the developing appreciation of time and temporality in International Relations theory and practice. It also provides a foundation for rethinking our assumptions about pessimism and international politics.

Introduction

Realist thought is often denigrated through its association with pessimism. Pessimism connotes resignation in the face of intractable human conflict, where cynicism substitutes for scholarly scepticism, and which fatalism shades into nihilistic acceptance of the futility of political action. Understood in this way, realism discloses a particular temporality, a cyclical and tragic historical time-consciousness, in which humankind is doomed to repeat its mistakes *ad nauseam*. Whilst recent scholarship has sought to disturb this conventional reading of realism, particularly in its 'classical' guise, the suspicion remains that realism is broadly locked into a pessimistic view of human affairs that limits our collective ability to imagine more encouraging political futures.

An interesting test case of this assumption is the work of John H. Herz (1908-2005). Herz is best known for his formulation of the 'security dilemma', in which polities' actions to increase their security lead to spirals of countermeasures fuelled by uncertainty and fear, potentially leading to war. This is doubtless a pessimistic reading of political affairs, in common with other 'classical realists' with whom he is usually categorised. Herz *was* a pessimist, given his long-standing concern with the possible extinction of the human species and the apparent inability of international politics to prevent this eventuality. Yet, throughout his long and productive career, Herz articulated pathways to alternative futures that belie the characterisation of pessimism as a barren and disreputable mode of thought. Far from being content to find the worst in all things, Herz the pessimist sought practical measures to shape international politics, precisely so as to deny the consummation of his dark visions of humanity's future. Herz was convinced the twin perils of nuclear annihilation and environmental degradation posed existential threats to humanity, with extinction certain unless humankind directed its intellectual and material resources to averting this catastrophe. If power politics were to prevail over a truly 'realistic' and ethical approach to global

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affairs, the outcome would be stark: '*Exeunt omnes. Finis.*'[1] Herz proposed a novel, interdisciplinary

programme of 'Survival Research' as a means of parlaying pessimism into an ethics of survival and

thence into political action. Through an exploration of Herz's preoccupations with extinction and

survival, this article attempts to rehabilitate pessimism as a productive mode of international theory

and practice and to enquire after its temporal commitments and orientation.

The article begins by setting out the problem of pessimism in International Relations (IR) and what is

at stake in understanding better this commonplace term. This introductory section pays attention to

work assigning specific forms of temporality to pessimism, especially within classical realism with

which Herz is commonly identified. This is followed by a discussion of John Herz's pessimistic

assertions about the implications for human extinction and survival of nuclear weapons and

environmental threats. The article then turns to his early identification of an ethics of survival, which

was channelled into his conceptualisation of Survival Research. Although Survival Research remains

unrealised, the article proposes that we understand Herz's pessimism as socially and politically

productive, and demonstrating not a withdrawal from the world but a wilful engagement with it. The

final substantive sections draw attention to the implications of this argument for thinking about

pessimism and temporality, and for IR, particularly with respect to the Anthropocene.

Pessimism, time and temporality

Joshua Foa Dienstag observes that political and philosophical pessimists are often dismissed because

they lack a 'positive project' for humankind.[2] They are viewed as 'dissenters from whatever the

prevailing consensus of their time happens to be, rather than as constituting a continuous

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[1] John H. Herz, 'Power Politics and Policies of Survival', in *Power and Policy in Transition: Essays Presented on the Tenth Anniversary of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy in Honor of Its Founder, Hans J. Morgenthau*, ed. Vojtech Mastny (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), 52.
[2] Joshua Foa Dienstag, *Pessimism: Philosophy, Ethic, Spirit* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 4.

alternative'.[3] This negative framing of pessimism leads to a demotion of pessimist thought in political philosophy and its derivative fields, and to its conformity with the everyday understanding of pessimism as a psychological tendency to find the worst in life or to believe in its worst possible outcomes. In this respect, pessimism is derided 'more as a disposition than as a theory'.[4] Pessimists are nay-sayers or cynics, interesting but cranky voices, whose personal predilections preclude their ability to provide systematic frameworks for political and ethical conduct in a complex world.[5] At the extreme, the pessimist is subject to contempt and accused of mental pathology, as in George Bernard Shaw's excoriating description of a pessimist as 'A man who thinks everybody is as nasty as himself, and hates them for it'.[6]

These pejorative connotations deter most people's self-identification as pessimistic and it ordinarily falls to external observers to diagnose this debilitating intellectual disease. Unsurprisingly, realist IR, given its identification of the intractability of conflict, is a rich hunting ground for anyone seeking pessimistic readings of the human condition. As is well established, political realism is imbued with a sense of tragedy, which, in its ancient Greek roots, communicates both the injustice afflicting the suffering innocent and the 'disastrous consequences' of attempting to limit suffering through the acquisition of ever-greater power and knowledge.[7] This tragic sensibility manifests in classical political realism as pessimism 'regarding moral progress and human possibilities'.[8] Seán Molloy demonstrates, for instance, how Hans Morgenthau's writing on power and morality is shot through with pessimistic assumptions about the 'ubiquity of evil' in public life that compromises all efforts to

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[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid. See also Paul Prescott, 'What Pessimism Is', *Journal of Philosophical Research* 37 (2012): 337-56.
[5] Mark Gismondi, 'Tragedy, Realism, and Postmodernity: *Kulturpessimismus* in the Theories of Max Weber, E.H. Carr, Hans J. Morgenthau, and Henry Kissinger', *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 15, no. 3 (2004): 435-64.
[6] George Bernard Shaw, *An Unsocial Socialist* (London: Constable, 1932 [1883]), 67.
[7] Richard Ned Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics: Ethics, Interests and Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 20.
[8] Robert Gilpin, 'The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism', *International Organization* 38, no. 2 (1984): 290.

attain social justice.[9] There is a 'tragic presence of evil in all political action', Morgenthau asserted in

Scientific Man Versus Power Politics.[10] If, in politics, one can only choose the 'lesser evil', this is an

intensely pessimistic perspective on humanity and the potentialities of political action. Neorealists

are inclined to reach similar conclusions but from an alternative premise. Rather than grounding the

inevitability of conflict in flawed human nature, neorealists see tragic outcomes as symptomatic of

international anarchy.[11] For all realists, tragedy is compounded by 'blindness to the realities of

international affairs',[12] whether the source of this myopia is moral degeneracy or inattention to the

structural qualities of international affairs.

A review of pessimism across the broad landscape of IR is beyond the present enquiry but political

realism claims no monopoly on pessimism. The critical tradition inspired by the Frankfurt School has

frequently managed to over-ride the anthropological pessimism of its progenitors – Adorno and

Horkheimer, in particular – but still shares their profound disquiet with the contemporary

condition.[13] Recent scholarship has read into classical realism and critical theory a shared concern

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[9] Seán P. Molloy, 'Aristotle, Epicurus, Morgenthau and the Political Ethics of the Lesser Evil', *Journal of International Political Theory* 5, no. 1 (2009): 94-112. See also Michael Spirtas, 'A House Divided: Tragedy and Evil in Realist Theory', *Security Studies* 5, no. 3 (1996): 385-423; Chris Brown, 'Tragedy, "Tragic Choices" and Contemporary International Political Theory', *International Relations* 21, no. 1 (2007): 5-13; Mark Evans, 'Doing Evil Justly? The Morality of Justifiable Abomination', in *Evil in Contemporary Political Theory*, eds. Bruce Haddock, Peri Roberts and Peter Sutch (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 124-42.
[10] Hans Morgenthau, *Scientific Man Versus Power Politics* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1946), 203.
[11] John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001). On the differing pessimistic assumptions of offensive and defensive neorealism, see Eric J. Hamilton and Brian C. Rathbun, 'Scarce Differences: Toward a Material and Systemic Foundation for Offensive and Defensive Realism', *Security Studies* 22, no. 3 (2013): 436-65. For an argument against interpreting neorealism as pessimistic, see Charles L. Glaser, 'Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-Help', *Security Studies* 5, no. 3 (1996): 122-63.
[12] Hans Morgenthau, 'The Political Science of E.H. Carr', *World Politics* 1, no. 1 (1948): 127.
[13] Jim George and David Campbell, 'Patterns of Dissent and the Celebration of Difference: Critical Social Theory and International Relations', *International Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (1990): 269-93; Chris Brown, '"Turtles All the Way Down": Anti-Foundationalism, Critical Theory and International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 23, no. 2 (1994): 213-36; Martin Weber, 'The Critical Social Theory of the Frankfurt School, and the "Social Turn" in IR', *Review of International Studies* 31, no. 1 (2005): 195-209.

with challenging, and ultimately subverting, the status quo.[14] Hans Morgenthau, in particular, has

been singled out for critical rehabilitation, although other scholars are less sanguine about the

appropriateness of this move.[15] What political realism and critical theory do share, however, is a

civilizational pessimism, articulated by Weber as a *fin-de-siècle* 'disenchantment' with the

instrumental rationalism of secular, bureaucratic and scientistic society.[16] This is often expressed as

disillusion with 'progress' and what Raymond Aron called the 'Promethean ambition' of modernity.[17]

In this political order, nature can be tamed by rationalism – of left or right – and by the proper

application of science and technology. Most such hopes were dashed by the catastrophes of the

twentieth century and, in Kahler's terms, 'produced pessimism regarding the power of human

reason to comprehend the realm of international competition and to contain the passions of

ideology and nationalism.'[18]

At work in the realist mind is an historical time-consciousness emerging from a particular

appreciation of temporality. Realism as commonly apprehended is pessimistic in that its ontological

commitments to anarchy and irredeemable human nature preclude positive outcomes that would

undercut those same commitments. This is something of a vicious circle, as noted by realism's many

critics. For this reason, Hom and Steels identify the temporality of realism as 'closed', a condition

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[14] Muriel Cozette, 'Reclaiming the Critical Dimension of Realism: Hans J. Morgenthau on the Ethics of Scholarship', *Review of International Studies* 34, no. 1 (2008): 5-27; Felix Rösch, 'The Human Condition of Politics: Considering the Legacy of Hans J. Morgenthau for International Relations', *Journal of International Political Theory* 9, no. 1 (2013): 1-21; Milan Babík, 'Realism as Critical Theory: The International Thought of E. H. Carr', *International Studies Review* 15, no. 4 (2013): 491-514; Felix Rösch, 'Realism as Social Criticism: The Thinking Partnership of Hannah Arendt and Hans Morgenthau', *International Politics* 50, no. 6 (2013): 815-29. For a sceptical perspective, see Kamila Stullerova, 'Embracing Ontological Doubt: The Role of "Reality" in Political Realism', *Journal of International Political Theory* 13, no. 1 (2017): 59-80

[15] Daniel J. Levine, 'Why Hans Morgenthau Was Not a Critical Theorist (and Why Contemporary IR Realists Should Care)', *International Relations* 27, no. 1 (2013): 95-118.

[16] To which we might add Durkheimian *anomie* and Marxist alienation; George Lawson and Robbie Shilliam, 'Sociology and International Relations: Legacies and Prospects', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 23, no. 1 (2010): 69-86.

[17] Raymond Aron, *The Century of Total War* (London: Derek Verschoyle, 1954), 117-18.

[18] Miles Kahler, 'Rationality in International Relations', *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 919.

affecting liberal notions of historical development also.[19] Whereas liberal thought is bound up with teleological notions of inevitable progress, realism instantiates a cyclical vision of historical time, yet each is closed in that they deny the possibility of escape from the historical path each is on. Importantly for the present discussion, however, is Hom and Steele's observation that this does not apply to all forms of realism. Specifically, they diagnose of classical realists, amongst whom they include John Herz, an unwillingness to become locked into a closed version of historical time. Instead, classical realists – from Thucydides and Machiavelli to Niebuhr and Morgenthau – embrace, for better or for worse, the messiness and contingency of social life. This is both in a descriptive sense – what are the temporalities of social life? – and, crucially for classical realism, 'as an internal resource for skeptical, prudent, ethical, and creative political practice'.[20]

Dienstag makes a similar point yet reaches a different conclusion regarding the temporal topology of pessimism. In his dissection of the complex interrelationship between realism and pessimism, he draws attention to the distinct temporality of pessimism.[21] The pessimist, he argues, cannot be synonymous with the realist, although they overlap in many ways, not least in their appeals to innate disorder. For the realist, particularly the neorealist, disorder exists because of the absence of order, not because anarchy itself has any 'positive ontological weight'.[22] This renders a realist understanding of the world descriptive rather than explanatory. It is also atemporal, as no account can be given of the emergence of disorder or its change over time. In contrast, the pessimist understands disorder to be the natural condition of the world, borne of a temporality of perpetual change. In this sense, pessimism derives from a positive ontological commitment to unstable temporality as the source of international disorder and international affairs in general. Pessimism finds inspiration in time, rather than the moral geometries of conventional realism, imposed as the

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[19] Andrew R. Hom and Brent J. Steele, 'Open Horizons: The Temporal Visions of Reflexive Realism', *International Studies Review* 12, no. 2 (2010): 271-300.
[20] Ibid., 280.
[21] Joshua Foa Dienstag, 'Pessimistic Realism and Realistic Pessimism', in *Political Thought and International Relations: Variations on a Realist Theme*, ed. Duncan Bell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008): 159-76.
[22] Ibid., 166.

latter are from above. Herz himself hints that the core theoretical models of realism, including his own, are epiphenomenal. He described even the quintessentially realist structure of the security dilemma, for example, as 'a sociopsychological constellation', rather than an ontological given.[23]

Dienstag is clear this is not an 'anything goes' situation. Whilst not linear in the liberal-progressivist sense, pessimist temporality *is* linear because it recognises the post-Newtonian idea of time as linear and entropic, and, necessarily therefore, the 'time-bound character of life and consciousness'.[24] We are thereby presented with a pessimistic temporality that is both open and linear, yet not linear-progressive. This conceptualisation also serves to distinguish between 'tragic' realism and 'pessimist' realism: unlike the former, pessimism is 'not a theory of an evil beginning, but rather a theory that refuses to guarantee a happy ending'.[25] As Dienstag indicates, pessimism is not an excuse for inertia: 'firemen always have plenty to do'.[26]

Extinction and survival

With this in mind, we can reconsider Van Munster and Sylvest's characterisation of John Herz as a 'card-carrying realist and professional pessimist'.[27] Herz was, in his own words, both a realist and a pessimist. Of the latter condition, he claimed to have been pessimistic even before leaving Nazi Germany in 1939, and certainly before the atomic attacks of 1945.[28] His biographer, Jana Puglierin, describes pessimism as 'a red thread' running through his work.[29] In many respects, John Herz conforms to the expected profile of a mid-century classical realist: he was disenchanted with

[23] John H. Herz, 'An Internationalist's Journey Through the Century', in *Journeys Through World Politics: Autobiographical Reflections of Thirty-Four Academic Travellers*, eds. Joseph Kruzel and James N. Rosenau (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989), 250.

[24] Dienstag, 'Pessimistic Realism', 161.

[25] Ibid., 162-3.

[26] Ibid., 172.

[27] Rens van Munster and Casper Sylvest, *Nuclear Realism: Global Political Thought During the Thermonuclear Revolution* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 78.

[28] John H. Herz, *The Nation-State and the Crisis of World Politics: Essays on International Politics in the Twentieth Century* (New York: David McKay, 1976), 8.

[29] Jana Puglierin, *John H. Herz: Leben und Denken zwischen Idealismus und Realismus, Deutschland und Amerika* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2011), 121.

modernity and notions of progress, appalled by the horrors of World War II, and pessimistic about the likelihood of humankind overcoming its evident flaws to avoid future tragedies. Kahler observes that European emigrés either side of World War II were more pessimistic than most about the potential of reason to 'curb the violent tendencies of world politics'.[30] It is unsurprising the *Shoah*, in particular, should cast its darkness across the work of German-Jewish intellectuals caught up in this migration. One of those was Hans Morgenthau, another John Herz, both now considered core classical realists.[31] Small wonder these scholars might be given to pessimism regarding worldly events.

Even before the nuclear strikes against Japan in August 1945, Herz had wondered whether the human species, on account of its perpetual recourse to conflict and violence, 'may turn out to have been among Nature's abortive attempts to create a species capable of survival'.[32] This concern with survival is a pronounced feature of Herz's work, although this alone is insufficient to mark him out from his peers; in one register or another, a concern with survival has always been central to IR. Martin Wight, in a famous provocation to disciplinary advancement, asserted in 1960, 'International theory is the theory of survival'.[33] In classical IR, states maximise their security in order to survive the condition of international anarchy, engendering an 'ethos of survival' that perpetuates competition and conflict.[34] This dynamic was formalised by Herz himself as the 'security dilemma', often regarded as the primary *explanans* of international behaviour.[35]

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[30] Miles Kahler, 'Rationality in International Relations', *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 920.

[31] Richard Ned Lebow, 'German Jews and American Realism', *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory* 18, no. 4 (2011): 545-66.

[32] John H. Herz, 'Power Politics and World Organization', *American Political Science Review* 36, no. 6 (1942): 1042.

[33] Martin Wight, 'Why is There No International Theory?', *International Relations* 2, no. 1 (1960): 48.

[34] Louiza Odysseos, 'Dangerous Ontologies: The Ethos of Survival and Ethical Theorizing in International Relations', *Review of International Studies* 28, no. 2 (2002): 403-18.

[35] Originally articulated in John H. Herz, 'Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma', *World Politics* 2, no. 2 (1950): 157-80. On the contemporaneous contribution of historian Herbert Butterfield, see Ken Booth and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 21-41.

The logical antithesis of survival is extinction, as Wight recognised in his binding of survival into 'the ultimate experience of life and death, national existence and national extinction'.[36] Herz was explicit in his attention to extinction, which, unsurprisingly, was grounded in his extreme anxiety about the new nuclear weapons, first atomic, and then thermonuclear. Nor was Herz alone in this respect either. Michael Howard recalls, for instance, one scholarly effect of the 'threat of total annihilation', when, in 1958, he co-founded a well-known journal, 'whose bleak title *Survival* indicated our view of the seriousness of the situation'.[37] President Harry S. Truman commented memorably a year after the first Alamogordo atomic tests, that 'mankind must change now or he faces absolute and complete destruction and maybe the insect age or an atmosphereless planet will succeed him'.[38] We need not look far for numerous other examples of pessimism, apocalypticism or resignation regarding international affairs under the thermonuclear shadow.

Survival and extinction were integral to international political thought during the early years of the thermonuclear era. Where Herz differed was in his attention to the nature of extinction, to the referent of the term itself. Audra Mitchell has shown that extinction concerns in IR have centred on the survival of 'particular states', not with the elimination of 'stateness' itself.[39] In this ontic register, IR fails to address the ontological status of non-survival as the irreversible erasure of the conditions that enable humans and their institutions, and of all modes of life.[40] Herz did not commit this error. Instead, he asserted the twin perils of nuclear weapons and environmental catastrophe to the future of life on Earth. In either case, the 'globe is in danger of becoming uninhabitable'.[41] In both

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[36] Wight, 'Why is There No International Theory?', 48.

[37] Michael Howard, *Captain Professor: A Life in War and Peace* (London: Continuum, 2006), 161.

[38] John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 53.

[39] Audra Mitchell, 'Is IR Going Extinct?', *European Journal of International Relations* 23, no. 1 (2017): 9. On state survival motives, see Burak Kadercan, 'Making Sense of Survival: Refining the Treatment of State Preferences in Neorealist Theory', *Review of International Studies* 39, no. 4 (2013): 1015-37.

[40] Mitchell, 'Is IR Going Extinct?', 9-10.

[41] John H. Herz, 'Foreign Policy and Human Survival', in *United States Foreign Policy at the Crossroads*, ed. George Schwab (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 167.

instances, his arguments resolved not to the primary importance attached by conventional realists to the state but to species-level concerns with extinction and survival.

Herz was too cautious an analyst to claim that nuclear weapons changed *everything* but they clearly changed much.[42] In his analysis, their principal challenge to international politics was to the integrity of the state itself, which nuclear weapons rendered permeable to exogenous destructive power on an existential scale. According to Herz, 'we are approaching the era of absolute exposure, with neither walls nor moats, in which penetration in its extreme [i.e. nuclear] form will mean not mere damage or change but utter annihilation of life and way of life'.[43] In this respect, the state would cease to fulfil its primary function of protecting its people and instead render universal the 'impossibility of defense'.[44] His assertion regarding the future inability of the state to provide security would attract the ire of Kalevi Holsti, who dubbed Herz a 'necrologist' for dismantling a core tenet of realist IR and announcing prematurely the demise of the state.[45] This is a caricature but Herz was in a minority of American realists confident enough to query the nature and prospects of the state.[46] Just as the new weapons jeopardised the integrity of the state, so too would they damage irrevocably prospects for collective security.[47]

Herz admitted later to underestimating the stabilising influence of deterrence, which weakened the potency of his original argument,[48] but his core commitment to potential nuclear extinction was unwavering in his early post-war career. Van Munster and Sylvest situate the John Herz of this

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[42] Peter Stirk, 'John H. Herz: Realism and the Fragility of the International Order', *Review of International Studies* 31, no. 2 (2005): 299, suggests Herz's realism is singular in asserting that nuclear weapons altered the structure of international order.

[43] John H. Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 61.

[44] Ibid., 168-69.

[45] K.J. Holsti, 'The Necrologists of International Relations', *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 18, no. 4 (1985): 675-95.

[46] Alexander B. Murphy, 'The Sovereign State as Political-Territorial Ideal', in *State Sovereignty as Social Construct*, eds. Thomas J. Biersteker and Cynthia Weber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 118.

[47] Herz, *International Politics*, 93-95.

[48] Bryan Mabee, *The Globalization of Security: State Power, Security Provision and Legitimacy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 74; John H. Herz, 'The Territorial State Revisited: Reflections on the Future of the Nation-State', *Polity* 1, no. 1 (1968): 11-34.

period, alongside prominent intellectuals like Lewis Mumford, Günther Anders and Bertrand Russell, in an intellectual orientation they call 'nuclear realism'.[49] These scholars strove to imagine brighter futures for a global society overshadowed by post-war technological, specifically thermonuclear, developments and by an overweening scientific rationality instrumentalising human life rather than enhancing it for its own sake. The four were bound together by a common insight: 'liberal modernity could survive collective suicide only by radically rethinking and transforming its foundations'.[50] For his part, Herz critiqued the roles of science and rationality in developing the means of omnicide, and the technocratic language and absurdities of civil defense and the putative 'winnability' of nuclear war.[51] In typically Herzian style, he wrote: 'The age-old dream of the mass-killers of history, which found a relatively modest realization in a Tamerlane's skull-mountains or even in Hitler's gas chambers, now, thanks to the progress made in the technology of destruction, seems finally to be fully attainable'.[52]

For Herz, science and technology were also implicated in the second major source of existential threat. Although he would not write at length on issues of environmental degradation, overpopulation, resource depletion and pollution until later in his career, Herz was keenly aware of these issues since at least the late 1940s.[53] In this respect, he was far in advance of most scholars of international politics. By 1959, he was discussing overpopulation and resource sustainability in the same breath as nuclear annihilation. In terms that seem prescient today, he noted the environmental threat was 'no less deadly than that of the atom bomb and possibly even more so

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[49] Van Munster and Sylvest, *Nuclear Realism*.

[50] Ibid., 2.

[51] John H. Herz, 'International Politics and the Nuclear Dilemma', in *Nuclear Weapons and the Conflict of Conscience*, ed. John C. Bennett (London: Lutterworth Press, 1962), 33. It is surely no coincidence this critique followed publication of Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960), which promoted the possibility of nuclear 'victory'. Herz elsewhere took aim at 'scientific' IR; John H. Herz, 'Relevancies and Irrelevancies in the Study of International Relations', *Polity* 4, no. 1 (1971): 25-47; John H. Herz, 'Political Realism Revisited', *International Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (1981): 182-97.

[52] Herz, *International Politics*, 228. See also, John H. Herz, 'The Impact of the Technological-Scientific Process on the International System', in Herz, *The Nation-State*, 172-94. On Herz's attitude to technology, see Casper Sylvest, 'Technology and Global Politics: The Modern Experiences of Bertrand Russell and John H. Herz', *The International History Review* 35, no. 1 (2013): 121-42.

[53] John H. Herz, *The Nation-State and the Crisis of World Politics* (New York: David McKay, 1976), 4, fn. 2.

because it is less obvious and less spectacular [which] permits the unenlightened, if they perceive it at all, to postpone serious consideration and concern'.[54] This combination of nuclear and environmental threat was a potent one and Herz intended to find new modes of engagement with this potentially catastrophic state of global affairs.[55] After all, as he noted, 'For the first time in the earth's history a species boldly calling itself *Homo sapiens* possesses the factual resources and should have the wisdom to secure its continuance'.[56]

Survival ethics and practice

In a tautological restatement of Wight's maxim, Herz stated that 'thinking about how to survive means thinking about international politics'.[57] Throughout the 1950s, he developed his own framework for international political thought, which paid great attention to extinction and survival within what he called 'realist liberalism'.[58] This was not an attempt to graft onto one mode of thinking an incommensurate other but a desire to balance a realist view of the world as it is with greater collective goals. This was not an easy undertaking in theory or practice.[59] Despite its apparent incoherence, realist liberalism might perhaps be characterised as the recognition that human extinction could best be allayed by developing a sensitivity to common interests. To tackle the sources of existential threat outlined above, one common interest had to be survival of the human species as a whole, rather than maintaining its fragmentation along national lines. 'The common interest in survival', he wrote, had to be prioritised over the traditional interest in seeing

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[54] Herz, *International Politics*, 316.

[55] John H. Herz, 'An Internationalist's Journey Through the Century', in *Journeys Through World Politics: Autobiographical Reflections of Thirty-Four Academic Travellers*, eds. Joseph Kruzel and James N. Rosenau (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989), 252.

[56] Ibid., 256.

[57] Herz, *International Politics*, 3.

[58] John H. Herz, *Political Realism and Political Idealism: A Study in Theories and Realities* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1951).

[59] Christian Hacke and Jana Puglierin, 'John H. Herz: Balancing Utopia and Reality', *International Relations* 21, no. 3 (2007): 367-82; Casper Sylvest, 'John H. Herz and the Resurrection of Classical Realism', *International Relations* 22, no. 4 (2008): 441-55; Ken Booth, Navigating the "Absolute *Novum*": John H. Herz's *Political Realism and Political Idealism*', *International Relations* 22, no. 4 (2008): 510-26.

one's adversaries fail.[60] Herz was unafraid to call this perspective 'universalist' but sought to distance

his brand of universalism from utopianism of any kind, which he regarded as 'unrealizable', despite

its attractive aspects.[61] He called not for world government, as some critics supposed, nor claimed

an inevitable victory for the powers of reason or order. On the contrary, he recognised the

emergence of a universalist mindset as highly contingent and probably quite unlikely.[62] Yet, he

believed it a necessary step towards preventing human extinction and promoting 'survival in a world

that had become mortally vulnerable for even the mightiest'.[63] For Herz, this was an acute ethical

proposition, articulated many times across his work. One instance is worth reproducing in full:

> It is my thesis that because in today's world, for the first time, the survival of all is in
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> jeopardy, even those who (like myself) are value-relativists (i.e. believe that, in principle, no
>
> 'ought to' can be derived from an 'is') can agree that, when certain values become so
>
> overwhelming important that their nonrecognition appears absurd to practically everybody
>
> engaging in human discourse, those values can be posited as certain or undeniable. Where
>
> the alternative to the 'ought to' denotes physical extinction of the entire human race,
>
> survival, not of individuals or specific groups but of mankind as such, becomes an absolute
>
> value.[64]

Herz explicitly combined, therefore, a political realism with an ethical idealism, resulting in what he

termed a 'survival ethic'.[65] This was applicable to all humankind and its propagation relied on the

generation of what he termed 'world-consciousness'.[66] Herz's implicit recognition of an open yet

linear temporality allowed him to imagine possible futures aligned with the survival ethic, whilst at

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[60] Herz, *International Politics*, 311.
[61] Herz, 'Idealist Internationalism', 178.
[62] Of which situation Herz wrote, 'I must in all honesty admit to considerable pessimism'; John H. Herz, 'Technology, Ethics, and International Relations', *Social Research* 43, no. 1 (1976): 109.
[63] Ibid., 102.
[64] Ibid., 107-8.
[65] Herz, 'An Internationalist's Journey', 259.
[66] Herz, 'Internarional Politics', 36.

the same time imagining futures in which humans become extinct. His pessimism about the latter

did not preclude working towards the former.

As Herz recognised, it was one thing to develop an ethics of survival but quite another to translate

theory into practice. What was required was a collective, transnational and inherently

interdisciplinary effort to address nuclear and environmental issues and to problematize notions of

security, sustainability and survival in the context of nuclear geopolitics and the technological

transformation of society. Herz proposed various practical ways in which young people in particular

could become involved in this project. One idea floated in the 1980s, which would alarm many in

today's more cosmopolitan and culturally-sensitive IR, was for a Peace Corps-style 'peace and

development service', which would 'crusade' to provide 'something beneficial for people living

under unspeakably sordid conditions' in the 'Third World'.[67] He expended most of his energy,

however, from the 1980s onwards, in thinking about and formulating 'a new subdiscipline of the

social sciences', which he called 'Survival Research'.[68]

Informed by the survival ethic outlined above, and within the overarching framework of his realist

liberal internationalism, Survival Research emerged as Herz's solution to the shortcomings of

academic research, public education and policy development in the face of global catastrophe.[69] It

was also Herz's plea to scholars to venture beyond the ivory tower and become – excusing the

gendered language of the time – '*homme engagé*, if not *homme révolté*'.[70] His proposals for Survival

Research were far from systematic but they reiterated his life-long concerns with nuclear and

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[67] Herz, 'Power Politics', 50-51. Herz also outlined numerous foreign policy proposals throughout his life, e.g. Herz, 'Foreign Policy'.

[68] Herz, 'An Internationalist's Journey', 260-61.

[69] The fullest statement of this programme, published posthumously, is John H. Herz, 'On Human Survival: Reflections on Survival Research and Survival Policies', in *Global Survival: The Challenge and Its Implications for Thinking and Acting*, eds. Ervin Laszlo and Peter Seidel (New York: Select Books, Inc., 2006), 9-25; an earlier version was published under the same title in *World Futures: The Journal of New Paradigm Research* 59, nos. 3-4 (2003): 135-43.

[70] Herz, 'Relevancies and Irrelevancies', 30.

environmental issues, and with the necessity to act in the face of threats to human survival. The principal responsibilities of survival researchers were two-fold. One, to raise awareness of survival issues in the minds of policy-makers and the public, and to demonstrate the link between political inaction now and its effect on subsequent human survival. Two, to suggest and shape new attitudes more 'appropriate to the solution of new and unfamiliar survival problems', rather than relying on ingrained modes of thought and practice.[71] The primary initial purpose, therefore, of Survival Research would be to identify scientific, sociocultural and political problems bearing on the possibilities of survival, and to begin to develop ways of overcoming these. This was, admittedly, non-specific and somewhat vague, but the central thrust of his proposal was clear: 'In our age of global survival concerns, it should be the primary responsibility of scholars to engage in survival issues'.[72] Herz considered IR an essential disciplinary contributor to this endeavour, one that should be promiscuous across the social and natural sciences. It should not be afraid to think the worst, if the worst is at all possible, and to establish the various requirements – social, economic, political – of 'a livable world'.[73] How this long-term project would translate into global policy is not specified but, consistent with his previous work, Herz identified the need for shifts in attitudes to and awareness of global problems and solutions. Only then would it be possible for 'a turn round that demands leadership to persuade millions to change lifestyles and make the sacrifices needed for survival'.[74]

Productive pessimism and temporality

In 1976, shortly before he began compiling the ideas that would become Survival Research, Herz wrote:

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[71] Herz, 'On Human Survival', 13.
[72] Ibid., 15.
[73] Ibid., 13-15.
[74] Ibid., 19.

For the first time, we are compelled to take the futuristic view if we want to make sure that there will be future generations at all. Acceleration of developments in the decisive areas (demographic, ecological, strategic) has become so strong that even the egotism of *après nous le déluge* might not work because the *déluge* may well overtake ourselves, the living.[75]

Of significance here is not the appeal to futurism *per se*, although this is important, but the suggestion this is 'the first time' futurism is necessary to ensuring human survival. This is Herz the realist declaring a break with conventional realism: Herz is not bound to a cyclical vision of political or historical time in which events and processes reoccur over and again. His identification of nuclear weapons as an 'absolute *novum*' in international politics demonstrates this belief in the non-cyclical nature of humankind's unfolding temporality.[76] As Sylvest observes of Herz's attitude to the nuclear revolution, 'the horizons of meaning it produced installed a temporal break with the past, and simultaneously carried a promise for the future'.[77]

This 'promise for the future' was not, however, a simple liberal view of a *better* future consonant with human progress. His autobiography is clear that his experiences of Nazism and the Holocaust destroyed all remnants of any original belief in 'inevitable progress'.[78] His frustration at scientism, technocratic deception, and the brutal rationality of twentieth-century killing, all but demanded a rejection of the liberal dream and the inevitability of its consummation. If the 'new age' ushered in by nuclear weapons, he wrote, is characterised by anything, it is by its 'indefiniteness of the age and the uncertainties of the future'; it was impossible under these conditions to draw firm conclusions about the future course of international politics.[79] Instead, he recognised the contingency, precarity

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[75] Herz, 'Technology', 109.
[76] Herz, 'An Internationalist's Journey', 252.
[77] Sylvest, 'John H. Herz', 450-51.
[78] John H. Herz, *Vom Überleben: Wie ein Weltbild Entstand: Autobiographie* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1984), 106.
[79] Herz, *International Politics*, 24, 30.

and fragility of international politics, and the ghastly tensions inherent to the structural core of international politics, the security dilemma.[80]

Herz was uneasy with both cyclical and linear-progressive ways of perceiving historical time. The former 'closed' temporalities are endemic to versions of realist IR, the latter to post-Enlightenment narratives feeding liberal-utopian visions of international relations and those of Marxism.[81] In their own ways, each marginalises and diminishes the contingency of the social world in and through time, and the agency of political actors in effecting change. Simultaneously, each shapes the futures that may be imagined and brought into being. Herz recognised this danger. Whilst drawing attention to his own gloomy disposition, he warns that without care and attention, 'the assumption may determine the event'.[82] As a pessimist, Herz was alert to the hazard of succumbing to negativity, cynicism or resignation. E.H. Carr recognised this also, in the difference between the 'deterministic pessimism' of 'pure' realism and those realists 'who have made their mark on history'; the latter may be pessimists but they still believe 'human affairs can be directed and modified by human action and human thought'.[83] Herz would share this anti-deterministic perspective with Carr. Moreover, the possibility of agency is a product of a temporality 'neither temporally closed nor deterministic, neither cyclical nor linear-progressive; it is rooted in contingency'.[84]

Again quoting from his autobiographical account of the impact of Nazism, Herz described the relationship between his early pessimism and his developing intellectual stance:

> The world became a theatre of the absurd. Suicide would probably have been the logical
> next move, and I considered it from time to time. But I was still too young for such a radical

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[80] Stirk, 'John H. Herz'.
[81] Hom and Steele, 'Open Horizons'.
[82] Herz, *International Politics*, 24, 31.
[83] E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001 [1939]), 87, quoted in Seán P. Molloy, 'Pragmatism, Realism and the Ethics of Crisis and Transformation in International Relations', *International Theory* 6, no. 3 (2014): 462.
[84] Hom and Steele, 'Open Horizons', 279.

step. One thing, however, emerged: a growing interest in domestic and, above all,

international politics. My complete resignation was no longer appropriate. If not from

within, fascism might perhaps still be destroyed from without. To my continuing interest in

theory, therefore, was added a practical interest in action.[85]

Channelling the spirit of E.H. Carr, he wrote of this 'brutal awakening' to the nature of power politics

in the 1930s that, 'Study could no longer be "pure" research; it had to become research committed

to warn of the deadly peril and show the way to the necessary action.'[86] His commitment to active

engagement was an early one, gestated during his personal experiences of Nazism in the 1930s.[87]

This desire to combat Nazism from the outside was manifest in his activities for the Allies during and

after World War II but it coloured his scholarly life also. Herz recognised pessimism was a powerful

force in his life but, rather than overcome or mask it, he used it to propel his intellectual project

further, and to engage with, not withdraw from, the world. He was, as van Munster and Sylvest

relate, '[d]eeply pessimistic yet a committed social thinker'.[88]

Herz was explicit about this: a realistic and consistent pessimism can clarify where we are and

prepare us to do what is necessary.[89] Pessimism is a necessary component of a realistic view of the

world, upon which proper and reasoned action can be founded. In this sense, pessimism can be

productive. It produces positive outcomes through action, rather than negative ones through

inaction or resignation. These are subjective value-judgements, to be sure, but are obtained through

a process of realist engagement with the world, rather than blind fumbling or ideological railroading.

Survival Research was a response to Herz's pessimism about the future, not a rejection of it. This

leads us to two observations about the relevance of pessimism to the study of international

relations.

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[85] Herz, *Vom Überleben*, 106, my translation.
[86] Herz, *The Nation-State*, 6.
[87] Hacke and Puglierin, 'John H. Herz', 369.
[88] Van Munster and Sylvest, *Nuclear Realism*, 10.
[89] Puglierin, *John H. Herz*, 270.

The first is that pessimism does not imply disengagement from the world. If anything, the example of John Herz suggests the opposite. He was a pessimist, but his brand of pessimism was no 'passive fatalism'.[90] As he recalled a few years before he died, 'I consider myself a realist who comes sometimes to pessimistic conclusions, but never gives up looking for solutions if ever so difficult ones'.[91] Pessimism can be a spur to thought and to action and need not be a watchword for conservatism in theory or practice.[92] This is not to say being a pessimist is easy. Morgenthau, for his part, 'never flagged in efforts to use his conceptual skills to help improve the human condition', despite his pessimism about the ability and will of people to take the long view on significant political issues.[93] This required that scholars chart different paths through troublesome times and articulate alternative visions of international order, not to preclude political action but to facilitate it; not quite the conservative position realism is often assumed to occupy.[94] In the face of worldly frustrations and horrors, it is this attention to the production of alternative futures that prevents 'pessimism from turning into fatalism'.[95]

The second observation is that it is unhelpful and misleading to treat pessimism and optimism as oppositional.[96] Pessimism and optimism are commonly regarded as antonyms but often enjoy a symbiotic relationship. In Herz, they mingle and cross-pollinate in ways that defy easy explication.

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[90] Stirk, 'John H. Herz', 306.

[91] John H. Herz, 'Reflections on My Century', *International Journal of Applied Economics and Econometrics* 10, no. 1 (2002): 151.

[92] Lorna Finlayson, '*With Radicals Like These, Who Needs Conservatives?* Doom, Gloom, and Realism in Political Theory', *European Journal of Political Theory* 16, no. 3 (2017): 264-82.

[93] Lebow, *Tragic Vision*, x; Michael C. Williams, 'Why Ideas Matter in International Relations: Hans Morgenthau, Classical Realism, and the Moral Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization* 58, no. 4 (2004): 633-65.

[94] Murielle Cozette, 'What Lies Ahead: Classical Realism on the Future of International Relations', *International Studies Review* 10, no. 4 (2008): 667-79; also, William E. Scheuerman, 'The (Classical) Realist Vision of Global Reform', *International Theory* 2, no. 2 (2010): 246-82.

[95] Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 14. The correlation between Herz's futurism and constructivism is noted elsewhere; see Sylvest, 'John H. Herz'; Felix Berenskoetter, 'Reclaiming the Vision Thing: Constructivists as Students of the Future', *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (2011): 647-68.

[96] Booth, 'Security in Anarchy', 537-38. See also Stirk, 'John H. Herz', and Ken Booth, *Theory of World Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 178-81.

Stirk claims, for instance, that Herz's optimism about how the world could be refashioned 'was never more than guarded', restrained by his fierce attachment to the importance of the security dilemma.[97] Puglierin notes that his 'blatant pessimism' (*eklatanter Pessimismus*) was always accompanied by some form of optimism.[98] We are reminded of Gramsci's famous statement regarding 'pessimism of intellect, optimism of the will' as the cognitive binary at work in the political mind.[99] Even as his pessimism deepened over the course of his career, he was always wont to end his analyses with a 'yet' or 'in spite of it all'.[100] Importantly, as he became more pessimistic, 'the solutions he proposed became ever more ambitious'.[101] His growing pessimism was accompanied by increasing resolve to tackle the problems of the world head-on, although, as he admitted in a footnote in the 1980s, 'Not for a moment do I have the illusion that what I have proposed is likely to happen'.[102] A suitably pessimistic aside, perhaps, but it did not deter him from continuing his project for another twenty years. This drive seems not to be rooted in optimistic conviction, nor even a subtle version of hope, but in a properly pessimistic reading of the world and its possibilities, engendered as they were by the ontological temporality of perpetual change.

Productive pessimism and International Relations

If intellectual pessimism has any utility to IR today, it is worth examining whether Herz's pessimism led to anything more concrete than sketches for an interdisciplinary research programme. Arguably, it did not. On the one hand, it is hard to argue that many of his pessimistic expectations have not come to pass.[103] On the other, Herz's concerns about nuclear and environmental risk did not lead to substantive contributions to scientific or policy debates.[104] Ned Lebow asserts that whilst Herz is most famous for coining and theorizing the security dilemma, he is 'most inspiring' to contemporary

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[97] Stirk, 'John H. Herz', 287.
[98] Puglierin, *John H. Herz*, 121.
[99] Antonio Gramsci, *Letters from Prison* (New York: Harper Row, 1973 [1929]), 175.
[100] Puglierin, *John H. Herz*, 294.
[101] Hacke and Puglierin, 'John H. Herz', 368.
[102] Herz, 'Foreign policy', 192-93, fn. 26.
[103] Hacke and Puglierin, 'John H. Herz', 378.
[104] van Munster and Sylvest, *Nuclear Realism*, 102.

scholars for his Survival Research proposals.[105] If this is the case, inspiration has yet to translate into sustained engagement with this aspect of his work, even though Survival Research had by the end of his life replaced IR as his principal disciplinary orientation.[106] That he did not have the effect on the world he might have hoped must have occasioned some personal regret but his commitment displayed, as a friend remarked after his death, that John Herz was 'a realist not a defeatist'.[107] Determination and perseverance may be necessary allies of a well-developed pessimism.

It is notable also, as IR begins to engage with the existential implications of the Anthropocene, that Survival Research not been more widely recognised.[108] Programmes for research and action proposed by critical scholars have much in common with Survival Research's interdisciplinarity and universalism.[109] Survival would also seem to be a primary logical concern for scholars of the Anthropocene, the stratigraphic denotation of which necessarily implies its own eventual demise. Herz's omission from these accounts may be due to his pessimism, his apparent unwillingness to articulate a bright, 'affirmative' ethics for a then-unnamed Anthropocene.[110] However, his vision is not so different: the historical moment identified by Herz then and critical scholars now thrusts upon humankind both the responsibility to act and the opportunity to do so. How to act is the key consideration, therefore, and it is true that Herzian Survival Research is long on ambition and short on detail. His close friend, Kenneth Thompson, was moved to ask if Herz was developing a 'coherent plan' or a 'crusade': Herz 'tells us little about what has been done and even less about guides to

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[105] Lebow, 'German Jews', 560.

[106] Booth, 'Navigating the Absolute Novum', 522. For secondary mobilisations of survival research, see Booth and Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma*, 261-65; Kennedy Graham, '"Survival Research" and the "Planetary Interest": Carrying Forward the Thoughts of John Herz', *International Relations* 22, no. 4 (2008): 457-72.

[107] Thomas G. Karis, 'John Herz', *PS: Political Science and Politics* 39, no. 4 (2006): 940.

[108] See also Campbell Craig, 'Classical Realism for the Twenty-First Century: Responding to the Challenge of Globality', in *The Politics of Globality since 1945: Assembling the Planet*, eds. Rens van Munster and Casper Sylvest (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 77.

[109] For example, Anthony Burke, Stefanie Fishel, Audra Mitchell, Simon Dalby and Daniel J. Levine, 'Planet Politics: A Manifesto from the End of IR', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 44, no. 3 (2016): 499-523.

[110] William E. Connolly, *Facing the Planetary: Entangled Humanism and the Politics of Swarming* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017); Cameron Harrington, 'Posthuman Security and Care in the Anthropocene', in *Reflections on the Posthuman in International Relations,* eds. Clara Eroukhmanoff and Matt Harker (Bristol: E-International Relations, 2017), 73-86.

action', he complained, adding, in a swipe at Herz's realist credentials, that he seemed to be proposing not only a 'new international system' but a 'new man' too.[111] Realists, the argument goes, can only 'deal with the world as it is, not as it should be.'[112] From a realist perspective, Herz is not realist enough; from a critical perspective, Herz is sufficiently realist to be irreparably antagonistic to the critical project and therefore barely worth considering. Even its critics note, however, that political realism 'prescribes a way to live in light of its pessimistic interpretation of human political relations'.[113] One may not agree with their prescriptions but most realists, as Michael Desch submits, 'study world politics in order to make it more humane and just within the limits of what international anarchy allows'.[114]

Nevertheless, aspects of Herz's project are problematic. Superficially, for instance, Survival Research is laden with rampant anthropocentrism. Herz's preoccupation with extinction concerns the death of the human species above all others. This is unequivocal in his own words and in any reasonable secondary analysis. Herz therefore falls short of developing a nuanced appreciation of the entanglements of human and nonhuman life.[115] Yet, Herz does not ignore nonhumans, or the facts of their survival and extinction. His concerns with environmental carrying capacity, ecological sustainability, pollution and overpopulation, all implicitly recognise humankind is ensnared in and dependent on the 'web of life'.[116] Moreover, as previously noted, Herz's pessimism grew from disillusionment with modernity, in which he identifies – as early as 1942 – a rupture between society

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[111] Kenneth Thompson and Beverly Thompson, 'Human Survival: Crusade or Coherent Plan?', in Schwab, *United States Foreign Policy*, 201, 214.

[112] Gary L. Ulmen, 'Conclusion', in Schwab, *United States Foreign Policy*, 228.

[113] Duncan S.A. Bell, 'Anarchy, Power and Death: Contemporary Political Realism as Ideology', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 7, no. 2 (2002): 234.

[114] Michael S. Desch, 'It Is Kind to Be Cruel: The Humanity of American Realism', *Review of International Studies* 29, no. 3 (2003): 419.

[115] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Stefanie R. Fishel, *The Microbial State: Global Thriving and the Body Politic* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017)

[116] Jason W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (London: Verso, 2015).

and Nature in language and content familiar today from the work of Bruno Latour, *inter alios*.[117] In one analysis of this predicament, Herz noted that Nature is not 'in the least concerned about the existence or disappearance of mankind'.[118] Whilst we should query the construction of Nature as an analytical category, and the consequent problems that arise, this is not a scholar unaware of the radical decentring of humanity from the cosmos. Herz's project *is* anthropocentric but not to the boorish exclusion of other life or environments.

A second criticism stems from the global pretensions of Survival Research. Herz performs two essential manoeuvres in setting up the problem of survival and extinction. The first is spatial, the second temporal. Herz, like other scholars gathered under the 'nuclear realist' umbrella, had a 'resolutely global vision'.[119] Not unreasonably, Herz saw nuclear and environmental problems as global, and their potential solutions in a similar light. In so doing, however, Herz reproduces his own historically situated vision of the world and casts it globally as a single, 'universal' space and time. If, as Kimberly Hutchings suggests, the aspiration of such a project is to be 'globally prescriptive', rather more attention to the diversity and heterogeneity of life-worlds would be required in order to satisfy even minimal standards of a global ethics.[120] Again, however, this apparently politically incorrect gambit stems not from ignorance but from a specific wish to avoid 'special' or 'parochial' interests correlated with specific ethnic, economic or political identities.[121] For Herz, 'going global' was a necessary step towards solving the problems at hand, not a desire to project a particularised Western, liberal version of scientifically-informed truth. Nevertheless, this sits uneasily with contemporary sensibilities in academic IR.

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[117] Herz, 'Power Politics'; Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
[118] Herz, *International Politics*, 230.
[119] Van Munster and Sylvest, *Nuclear Realism*, 10.
[120] Kimberly Hutchings, 'Thinking Ethically about the Global in "Global Ethics"', *Journal of Global Ethics* 10, no. 1 (2014): 26-29.
[121] Herz,' On Human Survival'.

Conclusion

Towards the end of his life, John Herz quoted wryly from a *New York Times* article exploring the primary difficulty faced by leaders attempting to mobilise concern around survival issues: 'Optimists are cast as winners, pessimists as losers'.[122] In contrast, Herz was unafraid to embrace pessimism and use it productively in thinking about international politics. Through an exploration of the themes of extinction and survival in the work of John Herz, this article suggests that pessimism is more nuanced than its everyday connotations of resignation, cynicism and inaction imply. If pessimism is seeing the world as it is, or likely will be, there is no *a priori* reason why pessimism should be less valuable than any other attitude to global life and society. Moreover, rather than pessimism being solely affective or a deeply emotional response to the world, it can be a respectable intellectual position in its own right. It also expresses assumptions about the temporal topologies of the future. Pessimism, in the putatively classical realist form explored here, for instance, is an expression of a temporal orientation described as 'open' yet 'linear', in both its future visions and its acceptance of the ontological contingency of the world. Herz understood his brand of pessimism was not a barrier to imaginative thought but a spur to it. It was also not an obstacle to action, as his commitment to Survival Research demonstrates. Pessimism is not an all-consuming misery or abandonment of reason. It need not induce apathy or inaction or, worse, cynicism and withdrawal. It is not bound to prevent, in today's academic argot, 'engagement' or 'impact'. For Herz, pessimism led to 'a sense of concrete urgency and the realization of the utter practicality of world-mindedness',[123] neither of which can necessarily be deduced from conventional readings of pessimism. In the work of Herz, we can identify a strong and fertile pessimism that helped foster a lifelong commitment to solving international problems. This article proposes we pay greater attention to the nature and character of such pessimism in international politics and IR, seeking not just to recover it but to pluralise and disaggregate it, and to examine its potential for productive engagements inside and outside the academy.

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[122] Ibid., 13.
[123] Herz, *International Politics*, 136

Acknowledgements